

Claim 1 (currently amended). In the method of processing air prior to separation of such air into gaseous components, the steps that include:

- a) first compressing a stream of air and cooling the compressed air, to enable water separation and removal from the stream, to provide a dry stream of air,
- b) then further compressing the dry air stream and cooling the compressed dry air stream to enable removal of contained remanent water,
- c) then expanding the cooled air stream in an expansion stage which extracts work from the expanding stream,
- d) then passing the expanded air stream to a separator operating to remove water from the stream, thereby producing dry air passed to a component gas separation stage or stages[.].
- e) said b) step including operating a booster compressor to compress dried air at a booster compression stage,
- f) controllably passing compressed air to flow from the discharge side of the booster compressor to the inlet of a turbine which provides said expansion stage, thereby by-passing said cooling step and water removal step of sub-paragraph b),

- g) providing a flow control valve in the path of said by-passing air flow,
- h) and operating said valve to maintain the temperature of the exhaust air from the turbine at or above about 5°C.

Claim 2 (cancelled).

Claim 3 (currently amended). The method of claim 2 ~~including providing a~~ wherein said booster compressor is driven by the turbine and operating to compress dried air at a booster compression stage defined at sub-paragraph b) in claim 1.

Claims 4-6 (cancelled).

Claim 7 (original). The method of claim 1 including the step of separating dried air into its component gases at said air component separation stage.

Claim 8 (original). The method of claim 2 wherein the turbine has air inlet nozzles, and including the step of adjusting said nozzles to control air flow delivery to said component gas separation stage.

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Claims 9 and 10 (cancelled).